



Seattle Permits

— part of a multi-departmental City of Seattle series on getting a permit

Demolition Permits

August 2002

Demolition permits are required to remove structures, including accessory structures, with more than 120 square feet of "projected" roof area (including overhangs) as specified in the Seattle Building Code (SBC), Section 106. Demolition generally means removal of the entire structure, although in some cases the foundation may remain to stabilize a site.

A Master Use Permit (MUP) may be required when demolishing a structure and establishing a new use (particularly when the use is residential) and when various other factors apply, such as whether the structure is in a landmark district or over water.

Housing Demolition

Many Seattle Land Use Code regulations concerning demolition are focused on the protection of housing. Housing demolition is discouraged when demolition is to make way for a small institution (Seattle Municipal Code [SMC] 23.44.022F), a major institution (SMC 23.69.020D), a telecommunications utility (SMC 23.57.007; 23.57.010), or a public school (SMC 23.79.002). Even demolition of housing that is unfit for occupation is carefully regulated (SMC 22.208.020, also known as the Housing and Building Maintenance Code).

Housing demolition is only allowed if one of the following criteria is met (per SMC 23.40.006):

- A change of use permit has been approved (but housing demolition will not be permitted to make way for non-required parking);
- DPD has approved a permit for relocation of the housing within the city;
- Demolition has been ordered by DPD for health and safety reasons; or
- Housing continuously empty since January 1, 1974.

NOTE: If you are considering partial demolition of a nonconforming use, you will need to consult with DPD

Land Use staff in person in our Applicant Services Center (located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Avenue) or use our online "Land Use Question & Answer Service" at www.seattle.gov/dpd/landuse.

Nonconforming Residential Structures

Residential structures that are nonconforming with regard to development standards (such as yards or lot coverage) may be demolished and rebuilt to the same location, size, and bulk. A survey by a licensed surveyor is required to document the current conditions prior to demolition. **NOTE:** This demolition provision does not apply to nonconforming uses, only to structures that are nonconforming as to development standards (see SMC 23.42.112).

Residential Structures with Tenants

At the earliest consideration of demolition of a building with tenants, regulations in the Tenant Relocation Assistance Ordinance (TRAO) should be reviewed to insure compliance (see SMC 22.210). For assistance, consult TRAO staff at (206) 684-7979.

Landmark Preservation

Seattle has designated seven landmark or special review districts and more than 200 individual landmarks of national and local significance. If your site is a designated landmark, or is located in an historic or special review district, you will need to talk with staff at the Department of Neighborhoods, (206) 684-0228. A Certificate of Approval is required for alterations (including demolition) to landmarks and buildings within historic districts. Review of these applications varies from district to district, depending upon the special characteristics of each area. For site-specific information, refer to the following SMC sections and ordinance:

- International District—23.66.318
- Pioneer Square Preservation District—23.66.115
- Pike Place Market Historical District—25.24.060
- Columbia City Landmark District—25.20.070
- Ballard Avenue Landmark District—25.16.065

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- Harvard-Belmont Landmark District—25.12.090
- Fort Lawton Landmark District—Ordinance 114011

State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Policies regarding preservation of landmarks are found in SMC 25.05.675. **NOTE:** If your building appears to meet the criteria for landmark designation, but is not currently designated as a landmark, the structure may be referred to the Landmarks Preservation Board for consideration (per SMC 25.05.675H2c).

Environmentally Critical Areas

Demolition on a site with environmentally critical areas (ECAs)—such as steep slopes, wetlands, or riparian corridors—may require environmental review, an appealable MUP decision. ECAs are defined in SMC 25.09.

The City's SEPA regulations require environmental review of the demolition of any structure or facility for which its construction would not be exempt (see CAM 208). Exemptions from SEPA for sites with environmentally critical areas are found in SMC 25.05.908C.

Getting a Demolition Permit from DPD

The following information concerns "demolition only" permit applications; if your project involves construction, further information will be required.

According to SMC 23.76.006, certain types of demolition permits are **Type I MUPs**, which means there is no administrative appeal of the decision. However DPD staff should be consulted to determine if the demolition permit requires a **Type II MUP** decision (e.g., environmental review/SEPA is required), which is appealable. Whether or not SEPA regulations apply depends upon:

- number of housing units
- square footage of commercial space
- whether structure is overwater
- whether there are related MUPs

Type I MUPs generally do not require plans for demolition permits. In most cases only the following will be required: the legal description, assessor's parcel number, the Mechanical/Building Contractor Disclosure Form, and a completed Construction Stormwater Control Checklist. These two forms can be obtained online at www.seattle.gov/dpd/publications/forms, or by mail, fax, or in-person from the Applicant Services Center, located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Avenue, (206) 684-8850.

Under certain circumstances, a pre-application site visit may be required, which involves an additional fee

(for example, where demolition is proposed close to a property line, with a house on the other side).

Type II MUPs require more information. For a full description of application materials for both Type I and Type II applications, please refer to CAM 316.

If your site is in an ECA, a pre-application site visit may be required, along with an additional fee. Call DPD's Site Development Desk at (206) 684-8860 for more info.

DPD Fees

Permit fees are established by the Seattle Permit Fee Subtitle available on DPD's fees page at www.seattle.gov/dpd/about or from the Public Resource Center, located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Avenue, (206) 684-8467.

Other Agency Requirements

Prior to performing any renovation or demolition work, an **asbestos survey** must be performed to determine whether there are asbestos-containing materials in the work area or structure, per the regulations of the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency (Clean Air Agency) and Washington Department of Labor and Industries (L&I). The asbestos survey must be conducted by an EPA certified (AHERA) Building Inspector (except renovation of single family residences).

For more information, contact the Clean Air Agency at (800) 552-3565, (206) 689-4058, or online at www.pscleanair.org. L&I's website is at www.lni.wa.gov/wisha/p-ts/Asbestos/asbestos3.htm.

You will also need to contact the appropriate agencies to learn **utility removal requirements** (e.g., sewer cap). Private utilities to consider, if applicable, include cable, natural gas, telephone, and steam companies. The telephone numbers for general information at relevant City of Seattle agencies include:

- Seattle City Light: (206) 684-3000
- Seattle Public Utilities: (206) 684-3000
- Seattle Dept. of Transportation: (206) 684-5132

As noted earlier, the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods must be consulted regarding **landmarks** by calling (206) 684-0228.